



September 25, 2009

We have just completed the exit conference with the Center for Substance Abuse Services (CSAT) Federal Core Technical Review Team and I would like to share with you some of their observations. It is always productive to see ourselves through the eyes of others.

The first areas that they reviewed were the organizational structure and operation of the Department. They commended us for our “living with change” mentality and being able to develop an effective but lean organization. This is made possible by the strong partnerships that we have developed with each of you. They also commended us for a “forward looking” approach to the current fiscal crisis which has allowed us to continue to develop new initiatives. They cited our work with corrections and recovery as two such examples. They said that they have not seen this approach in other States. As a credit to many of you, they commended our strong provider network which has “seasoned” professionals who share our vision for services. They made note of one of our key values which is to build services which are “the right services to the right number of people in the right settings and at the right time in their lives”.

In the clinical area, they were impressed with the comprehensive array of services which are available and noted that our continuum of care is greater than most States. They mentioned several examples of programs which they do not see in other States:

- The Continuing Care Model that we piloted a few years ago
- Our workforce development and the Leadership Institute
- Expanding CMAP to allow substance abuse patients access to medications
- The Diagnostic Organizational Assessment for smaller agencies
- And, the progressive provider site visits

In the fiscal area, they were impressed that our providers are able to continue to provide a high level of services in spite of the difficult fiscal conditions. Our contracts contain all of the federal language requirements. They did note that there is confusion over the implementation of the CNOM’s.

Of special interest to many of you are their site visits – three programs covering the areas of outpatient services, day programming and women’s services. They were impressed with all three programs. Comments included: “These were the best patient records we have ever seen”; “If I had a daughter in need of treatment, I would send her here” and “the staff work very hard to deal with a clinically complicated caseload.”

We requested technical assistance in several areas: the development of a state-wide uniform patient satisfaction tool; future development of coordinated services for individuals with developmental disabilities and substance abuse problems; the development of a transition plan to articulate all of the changes that we are implementing; and assistance with refining our fiscal controls in tracking the block grant expenditures.

In summary, this was a much more positive review than the previous one and I would like to commend our new leadership team at the Department and our continuing partnerships in the community for this achievement.